

# **LGBTQ representation in animation: characters, series, and voice actors**

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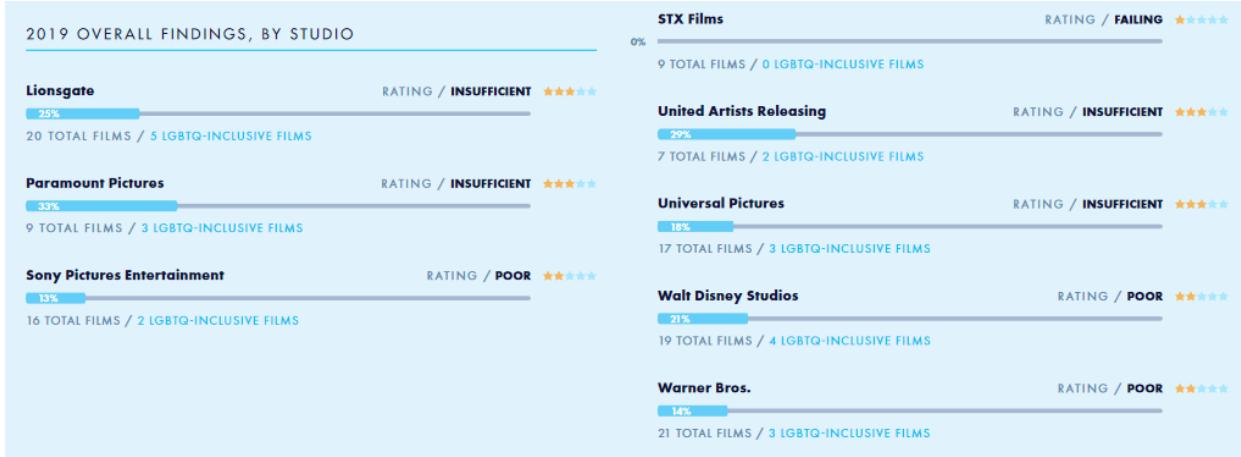
## Introduction

This 57-page e-book consists of five chapters on LGBTQ+ representation in animation in [2020](#), [2021](#), [2022](#), [Ashly Burch](#), [queer characters with trauma](#), and [concluding remarks](#). All these chapters were posted on my personal WordPress blog on [January 7, 2023](#) (originally published in December 2020), [January 12, 2023](#) (originally published in January 2022), [March 7, 2023](#) (originally published in January 2023), [February 11, 2023](#) (originally published in July 2022), and [December 14, 2022](#) (originally published in June 2022). Those posts were, themselves, reprinted either from *Pop Culture Maniacs*, or *The Geekiary*.

I did some spell-check and other revisions to ensure this text made sense, and to correct any errors that I made in the original text, which comes to over 16,000 words! Otherwise, the text is almost the same. Happy Reading!

- Burkely

# Chapter One: LGBTQ Representation in Animated Series In 2020 and Beyond



In the past year, various series have premiered on broadcast television and streaming platforms with LGBTQ characters and diverse casts. While there is still progress going forward, as every single major studio had failing, poor, or insufficient ratings for LGBTQ-inclusive films in 2019, according to the [recent Studio Responsibility Index](#) released by GLAAD, there were a number of LGBTQ characters in animated series which appeared in 2020 on platforms such as Netflix, HBO Max, CBS All Access / Paramount +, YouTube, Cartoon Network, Rooster Teeth and Syfy's TZGZ animation block, with hope for more in the years to come. Despite the dismal events of 2020, these series are making a big impact when it comes to interesting, strong, and complicated stories for LGBTQ characters, and should be praised for that, regardless of whether the shows are aimed at young adults, children, or mature adults.

Three big animated series ended this year: *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, and *Steven Universe Future*. *She-Ra* began streaming on Netflix in November 2018, while *Steven Universe Future*, the limited epilogue series of the inclusive Cartoon Network series, *Steven Universe*, began in the fall of 2019, and *Kipo*, another Netflix show, began in January of this year. All three made strides in representation. In addition to those series, there were a host of new and continuing shows like the new all-ages series [\*Cleopatra of Space\*](#), an existing all-ages animation titled *DC Super Hero Girls*, the [\*Mexican animated series, Victor & Valentino\*](#), the mature animated series [\*Star Trek: Lower Decks\*](#), and two YouTube-hosted series (*Helluva Boss* and *My Pride: The Series*) that all had LGBTQ characters as well. The same could be said about *Magical Girl Friendship Squad*, a wonderful mature animation

which parodied the magical girl genre, specifically anime like *Sailor Moon* and *Cardcaptor Sakura*, its pilot series, *Magical Girl Friendship Squad: Origins*, the epilogue series titled *Adventure Time: Distant Lands*, and the children's animated series *The Owl House*. Other series that shined included *RWBY*, a young adult animation, and the ongoing series, *Big Mouth*.



In 2020, lesbian characters appeared throughout these animated series. For example, the final season of Noelle Stevenson's *She-Ra* ended with an episode where the two protagonists, Catra and Adora, shown above, kiss and save the world (and universe) from destruction, with the show's villains defeated in one fell swoop. The show included a lesbian couple (Spinnerella and Netossa), and two other lesbian couples (Light Hope and Mara, Scorpia and Perfuma) were either shown in the show or identified by the show's creators, while Huntara was shown to be a lesbian character who may have a crush on Adora. At the same time, characters like Pearl and Garnet (a fusion of two Gem beings, Ruby and Sapphire) were shown to be lesbians in the original series, *Steven Universe*, but not in the epilogue series. Even so, Bismuth was implied to have a crush on Pearl. Additionally, the two moms of a superhero girl, Jessica Cruz (also known as Green Lantern), were introduced in an April 2020 episode of *DC Super Hero Girls*, while the two moms of Akila (Theoda and Pothina) were introduced in an episode of *Cleopatra of Space*.

Apart from these examples, Xochi was strongly implied to be lesbian and be in a relationship with Amabel in *Victor & Valentino*, as a planned date in the Season 2 episode

“Carmelita” between Xochi and Amabel was unknowingly foiled by the show’s protagonists. In *The Owl House*, Amity, a teenage witch, who falls in love with Luz, was confirmed as lesbian by show creator Dana Terrace. Noting is the mate of Hover in the show *My Pride: The Series* and Ilia Amitola, who has a crush on series protagonist Blake Belladonna, and a lesbian couple (Saphron and Terra Cotta-Arc) appeared for brief moments in the eighth volume/season of *RWBY*. In the case of *Magical Girl Friendship Squad*, Daisy, one of the protagonists who is living with a brown-skinned woman named Alex, was shown to be a lesbian, whether through having an ex who worked at a local urgent care clinic named Yolanda or Pansy, the “monogamous live-in girlfriend” in one of the alternative universes. Additionally, Daisy was said to have slept with every barista in a local coffee shop, while Nut, the animal companion of Alex and Daisy, had a former relationship with Verus, the villain. In October 2020, the creator of *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, Mike McMahan, [in an interview with Variety](#), confirmed that Captain Amina Ramsey was ex-girlfriend of Beckett Mariner at Starfleet Academy, and promised that the series would explore more LGBTQ storylines in its second season.



Gay characters also appeared in various animated series in the past year. For instance, Adora’s friend, Bow, in *She-Ra*, has two dads, George and Lance, while Rogelio and Kyle were hinted to be in a gay relationship, confirmed by series creator ND Stevenson. Furthermore, there

were multiple gay characters in *The Hollow*, and a character in *The Owl House*, Willow, a friend of Luz, has two dads. While Corvin having a crush on a character only known as “Coffee Dude” in *Magical Girl Friendship Squad* was implied, it was *Kipo* which made headlines when it came to gay characters. That is because Benson comes out as gay to Kipo, the show’s titular protagonist, a half-Korean and half-Black girl, who is also half-human and half-mutant. He later has a boyfriend named Troy, and their romance is an important subplot in the show’s final season, as shown in the above image.

The same could be said for bisexual characters, to an extent. In *She-Ra*, Bow and Glimmer, two of the show’s main characters, were implied to be bisexual, as was Sea Hawk, due to his relationship with a princess named Mermista, and previous relationship with a man named Falcon. More significant was a bisexual princess named Entrapta, [who is autistic](#) and Luz, a teenage Dominican-American witch [in \*The Owl House\*](#), who is shown, and confirmed, to be bisexual. A mature animated series, *Harley Quinn*, on HBO Max, focused on the relationship between two bisexual women, Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy, which blossoms with various kisses and a romantic ending to the show’s most recent season. Another mature series, *Helluva Boss*, which had a pilot in November 2019, showed a few episodes this year, which featured two bisexual characters: Moxxie and Stolas. In a bold announcement, Arryn Zech, voice actor of Blake in *RWBY* confirmed that she was bisexual [in a video stream](#). Additionally, the fact that Ramsey, in *Star Trek: Lower Decks* was Mariner’s ex-girlfriend, that Mariner previously dated Steve Levy, and that, as [McMahan put it](#), “every Starfleet officer is probably at the baseline bisexual,” with none intentionally made straight or cisgender, strongly hints that she is bisexual – or perhaps even pansexual, which wouldn’t be a first for characters in 2020, as Blitzo, [in \*Helluva Boss\*](#), is pansexual.



Finally, there were various non-binary, genderfluid, and trans characters in animated series in 2020, a true sign that things are changing in the realm of animated television. For one, in *She-Ra* is a non-binary shapeshifter named Double Trouble, who has a pivotal role in the show's last two seasons, Asher, a friend of Kipo, confirmed to be non-binary by those working on the show, and Y5, a teenage scientist and rabbit with an ambiguous gender. *Steven Universe Future*, on the other had at least two non-binary characters. For one, the non-binary and intersex fusion of Steven and his friend, Connie, Stevonne, makes a reappearance in the series. Secondly, a non-binary person, Shep, appears and helps Steven get over his feelings of resentment toward his friends "leaving him" and is shown to be the partner of Sadie, a singer of a former band in the town. Apart from this, every single Gem being featured in the show is a non-binary woman, as asserted by series creator [Rebecca Sugar](#). May Marigold in *RWBY* is a trans woman, as is a new character in *Big Mouth* named Natalie, and Jewelstar, voiced by a trans male actor, Alex Blue Davis, appeared in an episode of *She-Ra*.

And, perhaps the most interesting intersection of gender and sexuality in 2020 was the episode "Obsidian" of *Adventure Time: Distant Lands*, which focused on the relationship between a bisexual woman Marceline "Marcy" the Vampire Queen and Princess Bonnibel "Bonnie" Bubblegum, of a not-yet-known sexual orientation. In the final episode of the original series, *Adventure Time*, Marcy and Bonnie kissed, making their relationship canon, with this episode giving more of their backstory and their relationship together.

With these 15 animated series, and others like *The Loud House*, *BoJack Horseman*, *Castlevania*, *Hoops*, and *DuckTales*, along with minor characters in *Clifford the Big Red Dog* and *T.O.T.S*, there is hope in the future for diverse storylines and expanded representation. For one, it is possible that *Kipo* will come back in 2021, not just in a comic form, but as a movie, as the series creator, Rad Sechrist, [promoted a hashtag](#) for a movie about Wolf, one of the story's protagonists. Secondly, in January 2021, the final season of *Carmen Sandiego* will premiere on Netflix, which could end with a lesbian relationship between Carmen and Julia "Jules" Argent, and the new series, *DeadEndia*, streaming the same year will have a trans teenager named Barney as one of the protagonists.

Next year may bring the second season of *The Owl House*, with a growing relationship between the two teenage witches, Luz and Amity, a new season of the all-ages animation, *Lumberjanes*, the mature animated series *Hazbin Hotel* – created by the same people as *Helluva Boss* – chock full of LGBTQ characters, the series, *Q-Force*, which centers around a group of LGBTQ superheroes, the animated web series [Gen:Lock](#), which features a genderfluid character named Val(entina) Romanyszyn, and the upcoming series *S.A.L.E.M.: The Secret Archive of Legends, Enchantments, and Monsters*. For the latter series, it has already been established that one of the protagonists (Salem) is non-binary and pansexual cryptid, joined by a gay photographer named Oliver, and an asexual psychic medium named Petra. If McMahan follows through on his promise in the interview he had with *Variety* magazine, the next season of *Star Trek: Lower Decks* will explore Mariner's implied bisexual identity and if rumors are true, then the third season of *Final Space* will have LGBTQ characters. Similarly, the original pitches of Sara Eissa's animated action-adventure series, *Astur's Rebellion*, which Crunchyroll turned down this year, which has a diverse cast, and the [2d animated series Recorded by Arizal](#), the prelude which aired on Rooster Teeth, both had LGBTQ protagonists. If these series move into production, then this would expand further stories for LGBTQ characters in animation. So, there's a lot to look forward to in 2021 in terms of animated series and these developments will undoubtedly affect the ongoing war between streaming platforms for more subscribers, profits for themselves, and [film distribution itself](#).

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## Chapter Two: Booming LGBTQ Representation in Animation in 2021

### 22. Fan Favorite Couple

(Don't see yours in the multiple choice? Use the write-in option!)

- Sara and Ava, Legends of Tomorrow
- Toni and Cheryl, Riverdale
- Anissa and Grace, Black Lightning
- Sue and Emily, Dickinson
- Maya and Carina, Station 19
- Alex and Kelly, Supergirl
- Coop and Patience, All American
- Write In Ballot (please specify)
- Dani and Jamie, The Haunting of Bly Manor
- Waverly and Nicole, Wynonna Earp
- Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy, Harley Quinn
- Sterling and April, Teenage Bounty Hunters
- Mareceline and Princess Bubblegum, Adventure Time
- Rue and Jules, Euphoria

*Two of the choices for “Fan Favorite Couple” in Autostraddle’s Annual Gay Emmys in September 2021 were in animated series. Both choices are highlighted here by yellow boxes.*

In December 2020, as noted in the last chapter of this e-book, I wrote that there is “hope in the future for diverse storylines and expanded representation,” adding that there is “a lot to look forward to in 2021 in terms of animated series...[which] will undoubtedly affect the ongoing war between streaming platforms for more subscribers, profits for themselves, and film distribution itself.” That still rings true, and 2021 has even more representation that I had imagined in December 2020, with continuing series like *The Owl House*, *Disenchantment*, *Helluva Boss*, *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, the third (and final) season of *Final Space*, and many others. The representation in 2021 is [part of the “whirlwind”](#) of LGBTQ representation which creator ND Stevenson described in November 2021.

When Autostraddle, a digital lesbian culture publication, posted about their annual awards show, the Annual Gay Emmys, [in September 2021](#), the influence of LGBTQ representation in animation was evident.<sup>1</sup> While most of the nominees for the categories were live-action series,

<sup>1</sup> This was also clear in GLAAD’s 2020-2021 [“Where We Are on TV” report](#) (counting characters which premiered on primetime cable TV from June 2020 to May 2021) [which noted](#) characters in *BoJack Horseman* (since

there was an entire category dedicated to such series, “Outstanding Animated Series.” *Harley Quinn*, *Blues Clues & You!*, the “Obsidian” episode of *Adventure Time: Distant Lands*, *The Owl House*, “The Politics Episode” of *One Day at a Time*, and *Magical Girl Friendship Squad* were nominees.<sup>2</sup> The *Harley Quinn* episode “Something Borrowed,” was one of the nominees for the “Best Episode with LGBTQ+ Themes” category, and two couples in animated series were nominated for the “Fan Favorite Couple” question. When the results were announced *Harley Quinn* [won](#) for Outstanding Animated Series, although it was unfortunately the only animated series to win in a category. Of the series nominated, *Magical Girl Friendship Squad* and *One Day at a Time* ended in 2020,<sup>3</sup> *Distant Lands* ended in 2021, while three others are ongoing (*Harley Quinn*, *Blue Clues & You!*, and *The Owl House*).

Keeping this in mind, reviewer Jade King, [in a review of](#) *The Owl House*, said “we shouldn’t look toward giant corporations for continual queer representation.” While that still rings true, many of the shows with LGBTQ representation are produced and broadcast by such companies. For instance, of the over 20 Western animations noted in this article, almost all of them are produced by the subsidiaries of companies like Disney, WarnerMedia, NBCUniversal, ViacomCBS, and Sony, which bring in more than \$1 billion a year.<sup>4</sup> The same is the case with

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cancelled), *The Owl House* (p. 15, 40), *Carmen Sandiego* (p. 19), *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* (p. 19, 40), *Steven Universe Future* (p. 40), *DuckTales* (p. 40), *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (p. 40), *Harley Quinn* (p. 42), *Young Justice* (p. 42). Let’s not forget that as Mike A. Epstein of LezWatch.TV [pointed out](#), “while GLAAD does look into some international shows, it’s very skewed American.”

<sup>2</sup> 2021 was the fourth year of the awards show. [In 2020](#), *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* won for the “Outstanding Animated Series” category (the runner-up was *BoJack Horseman* and other nominees were: *The Owl House*, *Steven Universe Future*, *Harley Quinn*, and *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*). Also *She-Ra* was nominated for the “Best TV Episode With LGBTQ+ Themes” category, for the episode “Heart Part 2” while Adora and Catra in the same show won the “Fan Favorite Couple” award. [In 2019](#), *Steven Universe*’s episode “Reunited” was nominated for “Outstanding Individual Episode with LGBTQ+ Themes” and *She-Ra* won “Outstanding Animated Series” category (runner-up was *Steven Universe* and other nominees were: *Love, Death & Robots*, *Bojack Horseman*, *Adventure Time*, and *Tuca & Bertie*). In [2018](#), *Rebecca Sugar*, the showrunner of *Steven Universe*, was a runner-up for the “Outstanding LGBTQ+ Director / Producer / Showrunner” category, *Steven Universe* was one of the nominees for the “Most Groundbreaking Representation” category, and *Steven Universe* won the “Outstanding Animated Series” category (runner up was *Adventure Time* and other nominees were: *Danger & Eggs* and *Loud House*).

<sup>3</sup> Apart from these series, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Recorded by Arizal* (implied that future story could have LGBTQ characters), and *Onyx Equinox* (with bisexual characters) ended in 2020. The hinted *Astur’s Rebellion* series by Sara Eissa was posed in 2020, but likely will not return. Additionally, the third “season” (as Peacock called it) of *Cleopatra in Space*, as I [wrote about in December 2020](#), aired on Peacock on January 24, but had no more rep than the two moms of Akila which appeared in “School Break” which aired in November 2020.

<sup>4</sup> The other series are produced by a smattering of companies like Shadow Machine (*Final Space*; *Tuca & Bertie*), SpindleHorse Toons (*Helluva Boss*), Liden Films and Felix Film (*Otherside Picnic*), TNK (*Redo of Healer*), Millepensee (*So I’m a Spider, So What?*), The ULULU Company and Rough Draft Studios (*Disenchantment*), Zero-G, Inc. (*High-Rise Invasion*), Skybound Entertainment (*Invincible*), Asahi Broadcasting Corporation (*My Next Life*)

many of the Japanese anime series noted in this post, which tend to have more LGBTQ representation, generally, than Western animation, although the instances of representation between Western and Japanese animation is slowly reaching the same level, and Japanese anime often [plays into “many problematic aspects”](#) and stereotypes in one way or another. King [also pointed out](#) that queer representation is not a competition, but should be a collaboration, rather than putting down one show while elevating another, arguing that “queer representation isn’t a linear path to acceptance. It’s messy and inconsistent.”

In 2021, shows [on streaming platforms](#) lead the way when it came to representation. Netflix tops the list in this regard, with shows like *Disenchantment*, *Carmen Sandiego* (to a lesser extent), and *City of Ghosts*. With *Disenchantment*, the show [was described](#) as “queer through and through,” with what some would call queer vibes throughout, had its third part air on Netflix in January of 2021. Recurring characters Odval (voiced by Maurice LaMarche) and Sorcerio (voiced by Billy West) were shown to be a gay couple, while there was an implied gay couple between Big Jo (voiced by LaMarche), and his assistant, Porky. Furthermore, Princess Bean, called a “rebellious, alcoholic, adventurous princess” [by one reviewer](#), the show’s protagonist, voiced by Abbi Jacobson, was shown to be bisexual or pansexual. This is illustrated through her kissing the elf, Elfo (voiced by Nat Faxon), trying to have sex with various men, seeming to have feelings for Lady Bowmore (voiced by Tress MacNeille), female explorer, and falling in love with a mermaid named Mora (voiced by Meredith Hagner). This is further supported by the fact that Jacobsen is bisexual herself, making the representation that much more genuine. As for *Carmen Sandiego*, it was more implied than anything else. In February, in Instagram Live interview, Duane Capizzi, the showrunner of *Carmen Sandiego*, said that it was intentional that Le Chevre (also known as Jean Paul) and El Topo (also known as Antonio) were together, and confirmed them at a couple, calling them villains which are “sweet,” but you “can’t help but love.”<sup>5</sup>

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*as a Villainess: All Routes Lead to Doom!)*, P.A. Works (Aquatope on the White Sand), and Titmouse (*Star Trek: Lower Decks*).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIjX9rGvUmk>, at 41:40-44:24. A few months later, an animator for the show said that they were “given explicit directions” to make Le Chevre and El Topo, in their scenes together, “[romantic and intimate.](#)” This confirmed what GLAAD [said in their report](#): “...Netflix includes queer characters in the animated series Carmen Sandiego” (p. 19)



*Carmen Sandiego and Julia Argent in the Carmen Sandiego: To Steal or Not to Steal animated film*

Some fans also speculated that protagonist Carmen Sandiego had feelings for Julia “Jules” Argent, called “[Carulia](#)” by fans, but that has not been confirmed by Capizzi or anyone on the show’s staff. Similarly, [for City of Ghosts](#), the LGBTQ representation was subtle rather than outward like in *Disenchantment*. In the case of that series, Thomas, one of the show’s protagonists, a specialist of the Ghost Club and voiced by transgender child actor Blue Chapman, was non-binary, confirmed as such by show creator Elizabeth Ito. One episode of the series also showed a character with two mothers. The series, more broadly, [was praised](#) for its simple animation and characters, but having “strikingly complex” stories and background art which reflects the “realities of one of America’s richest cultural melting pots,” Los Angeles.

*Disenchantment*, *Carmen Sandiego*, and *City of Ghosts* were not the only Netflix shows with LGBTQ characters. The kids-oriented *Ridley Jones* also included such characters. The preschool animated series included [a non-binary bison](#) named Fred voiced by Iris Menas, and [two characters](#) (Aten and Kosi) voiced by Andrew Rannells and Chris Colfer, two openly gay actors. The series was created by Chris Nee, who created series like *We The People* and *Doc McStuffins*, both of which featured LGBTQ characters. Nee described herself as gay and “relatively butch” in [an interview in 2021](#). Jacobson, who had voiced Bean in *Disenchantment*, voiced Katie, the protagonist of the animated film, *The Mitchells vs. the Machines*. In the film, she wears a pin with a rainbow flag and later is noted as having a girlfriend named Jade at film school, with the

representation subtle. More outward, in terms of the representation, were *Chicago Party Aunt*, which included a gay man [named Daniel](#), and *Q-Force*, which featured an assortment of LGBTQ characters. The latter series, which had caused great controversy and consternation online due to its use of stereotypes, features a gay protagonist named Steve Maryweather (voiced by Sean Hayes), a gay man named Benji (voiced by Gabe Liedman), a lesbian woman named Deb (voiced by Wanda Sykes), and a gay drag queen named Twink (voiced by Matt Rogers). A late comer to this article was *Arcane*, the first part which aired from November 6 to November 20. Show writer Amanda Overton confirmed that Caitlyn Kiramman was a lesbian, saying that there is no word for gay or stigmatization against it in Piltover, meaning that Caitlyn [could “marry any gender or race suitor,”](#) but such a person would become “a part of her house.” Overton [also said](#) that the relationship between Caitlyn and Vi is “naturally developing,” with the trauma that Vi’s parents were killed by Enforcers, with Vi also confirmed as a lesbian [as well](#). On Twitter, Overton said that everyone on the show’s crew [is “working together](#) to tell the same story.”

On November 25, 2021, the [final season of \*F Is For Family\*](#), aired on Netflix. It included Louis, the gay brother of Sue, a character voiced by Neil Patrick Harris, an openly gay actor. It also included Ginny Throater, who divorces her husband, Greg Throater, and is bisexual, while Greg is gay, and divorces her as a result. Additionally, Eileen, Frank’s sister, is lesbian and becomes Ginny’s lover. The second and final season of the Netflix series, *Centauroworld*, premiered on December 7. It featured three gay characters: Zulius, Ched, and Splendib. Zulius, who was hinted to be gay in the show’s first season was confirmed as such in the second season, while Ched was revealed to be gay. Furthermore, Zulius is voiced by Parvesh Cheena, an openly gay actor.

Other than shows on Netflix, there were multiple series on other streaming platforms included LGBTQ characters. For instance, [Volume 8 of \*RWBY\*](#), running from November 2020 to March 2021, which streamed on the Rooster Teeth website, featured a trans woman named May Marigold, who is voiced by a trans woman, Kdin Jenzen, a bisexual catlike woman named Blake Belladonna (voiced by [Arryn Zech](#)), and various lesbian characters. The latter included Ilia Amitola (voiced by Cherami Leigh) and a couple (Saphron and Terra Cotta-Arc) who have a child named Adrian. At the same time, the first season of *Invincible*, which aired on Amazon Prime from March to April 2021, [included a gay recurring character](#) named William Francis Clockwell, voiced by openly gay actor Andrew Rennells.

HBO Max, also owned by Warner Media like Rooster Teeth, featured a gay couple, Jonny Quest and Hadji Sing, in *Jellystone!*, [while](#) *Young Justice*, which focuses on young superheroes from DC comics, has a rash of such characters. Specifically, Kaldur'ahm/Aqualad (voiced by Khary Payton) is [polysexual](#), while Marie Logan (voiced by Danica McKellar) is bisexual or lesbian, Eduardo “Ed” Dorado Jr. (voiced by Freddy Rodriguez) is gay, Violet Harper (voiced by Zehra Fazal) is genderqueer, Wynde (voiced by Robbie Daymond) is gay, and Harper Row (voiced by Fazal) is bisexual. The second half of the fourth season of *Young Justice* premiered in [late October](#) of 2021 and aired until December 30, 2021. While Kaldur reappeared in the newest season and with speaking lines, characters such as Ed, Bart, Violet, and Harper either had no lines, were only pictured, or only their voices were heard. At the same time, Logan died in Season 2, Wynnde has not made an appearance. These are unfortunate developments.

The [HBO Max preschool series](#), *Little Ellen*, featured same-sex couples, with a second part of season one released in October, while *Summer Camp Island*, which also airs on HBO Max, includes a non-binary couple (Alien King and Puddle) and two presumably gay ghosts. It was also implied in various episodes that Timothy Brice Campbell in the HBO Max series *Close Enough* was either gay or bisexual. The second and presumably final season [of gen:LOCK](#) premiered on HBO Max and it featured a genderfluid character named Val(entina) Romanyszyn. Her character was not only groundbreaking as a genderfluid character by smashing apart tropes attributed to such characters, but is voiced by a non-binary pansexual voice actor named Asia Kate Dillon. Val confirmed that she was pansexual in the same season and Robert Sinclair was shown to be gay, with a boyfriend named Chris.



Other streaming platforms, like Paramount+ had animated series with LGBTQ characters. For example, the *Rugrats* reboot, [a gay single mother named Betty DeVille](#), voiced by openly queer actress Natalie Morales, is a character. More prominent, however, is *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, fulfilling on Mike McMahan's commitment to explore the identity of [Beckett Mariner](#), who is voiced by Tawny Newsome. In the episode "We'll Always Have Tom Paris," Mariner tells Tendi, "I'm always dating bad boys, bad girls, bad gender non-binary babes, ruthless alien masterminds, bad bynars," with a reviewer [saying](#) that Mariner affirms that "she is essentially pansexual." In another episode she reveals she spent time on a space station and notes one of the nature preserves they are going to is where she went on a date, not specifying whether the date was male or female. She also calls Boimler, her male friend and colleague, her "number one." Andy Billups (voiced by Paul Scheer), the ship's chief engineer, is implied to be asexual as he has no interest, in the episode "Where Pleasant Fountains Lie," of sleeping with the male or the female guard, and he is not shown participating in any sex acts in the "Naked Time" simulator in the show's following episode. Whether the series [follows up on this](#) in an expected third season is anyone's guess. At the same time, *Star Trek Prodigy*, also on Paramount+ includes Zero, who is a Medusan, with Medusans as genderless aliens who [use they/them pronouns](#).

Hulu and Peacock also featured LGBTQ characters. In March, the series creators of *Solar Opposites*, Justin Roiland and Mike McMahan [confirmed](#) that Korvo and Terry are a romantic couple in a committed relationship. Another Hulu series has two LGBTQ characters, one of

whom is bisexual (Melissa Tartleton) and another which is gay (Gary Garoldson). Furthermore, in the Pride-themed episode of the children's animation, *Madagascar: A Little Wild*, an okapi named Odee Elliott appears, who is non-binary. Odee is voiced by Iris Menas who said the episode's biggest takeaway [is “acceptance and love and celebration”](#) while GLAAD's director of entertainment media, Jeremy Blacklow, said the episode comes at a time that "LGBTQ inclusion in kids and family programming is rapidly growing," and stated that DreamWorks Animation is partners with GLAAD to "ensure that all families are represented on-screen."

A late comer is the Crunchyroll [coming-of-age series \*High Guardian Spice\*](#), created by [a trans man](#), Raye Rodriguez, who was a character designer for Shadi Petosky's *Danger & Eggs* animated series. This series featured trans and lesbian characters, with one of the trans characters voiced by Rodriguez himself! The other character, Snapdragon "Snap", was voiced by a trans woman, and is on the road to transitioning to being a trans woman by the end of the series. The lesbian characters included two cousins of Sage, one of the story's protagonists. They are named Aloe and Anise, her wife. The person who voiced Anise is a lesbian actress and she voiced two other characters in the show, meaning that those characters could be arguably lesbian coded. Furthermore, Sage showed an attraction to Snap and her friend Rosemary, meaning that she is presumably a lesbian, and Rose may be as well. Thyme, one of the show's other protagonists, shows an attraction to a mermaid in one episode, while her roommate Parsley is remarkably close with her. At the same time, another voice actor is openly gay and a person who voices a character named "Slime Boy" is ambiguously queer.

At the same time, terrestrial broadcast networks had their share of LGBTQ characters. This included gay men Crispin Cienfuegos and Ham Tobin in *The Great North*, voiced by Julio Torres and Pauli Rust respectfully, an implied lesbian woman named Frankie (voiced by Naomi McDonald) in Cartoon Network's *Elliott from Earth*, and a queer man named Jerry Smith. *Craig of the Creek*, another Cartoon Network animated series currently airing features non-binary, lesbian, gay, and agender characters. Nickelodeon's *Blue's Clues & You!* [featured an alphabet song](#) which featured multiple Pride flags, Jessie Juwono, a supervising director of the now-ended *Big Hero 6: The Series*, confirmed Globby and Felony Carl, [as a gay couple](#), and storyboarder Sam King said, two days after the series finale of Disney's *DuckTales*, that [she would permit](#) fans to "assume I think every character except, like, Lunaris, is LGBTQIA+ in some shape or another." On the other hand, Nickelodeon's still airing *The Loud House* features lesbian, gay,

and bisexual characters. Another series, *Tuca & Bertie*, the new season of which began airing on Adult Swim [in June 2021](#), on Netflix for season 1, featured various LGBTQ characters as well. This included a bisexual Toucan named Tuca, and a female seagull, Kara, who is a former love interest of Tuca.

The ongoing Cartoon Network series, *Victor and Valentino*, features a character who is implied to be a lesbian: Xochi Jalapeno, voiced by Cristina Vee. As [I wrote in November 2020](#), she has a clear romantic interest in another woman, Amabel, and her lesbianism is “heavily implied by her never showing romantic feelings for male characters and often blushing when she is around Amabel.” Sadly, in May of 2021, it was announced that *The Venture Bros* was ending. The series featured various LGBTQ characters such as the openly gay Colonel Horace Gentleman, a lesbian character named Virginia “Ginnie” Dunne, and a gay couple: The Alchemist and Shore Leave. Luckily, it was later announced the series would have a [direct-to-video film continuation at some point](#).

Some shows aired on actual television channels and on broadcast networks. One such show was *Final Space*, with the show’s final season premiering on Adult Swim first, then later HBO Max and Netflix (for international broadcasts), from March 2021 to June 2021. The show’s cancellation was [confirmed](#) by show creator Olan Rogers. *Final Space* had previously aired on TBS. In [December of 2020](#), I wrote that “if rumors are true, then the third season of *Final Space* will have LGBTQ characters” and that turned out to be true! This was [manifested in a humanoid alien by the name of Ash Graven](#) voiced by Ashly Burch. She had previously voiced a bisexual woman in *OK K.O.! Let’s Be Heroes* named Enid, a non-binary Gem woman [in Steven Universe](#) named Rutile Twins, a lesbian woman named Laney in *The Loud House*, and currently voices Molly McGee, a Thai-American protagonist of the series, *The Ghost and Molly McGee*.

In *Final Space*, however, Ash was shown to be a lesbian character in the eighth episode of the show’s final season, as she holds hands with a genderless being, Evra, voiced by a biracial queer actress, Jasmin Savoy Brown, and she had previously hated a man who had rejected her in a previous season. In a podcast about the episode, Rogers confirmed that Ash was lesbian and noted that his co-writer, David Sacks, pushed for an episode about Ash, while he had wanted to do another character. He also stated, at the time, that if the show were to have another season he would expand on the relationship between Ash and Evra. Sadly, he never got the chance to do this due to the show’s cancellation. The show also included recurring LGBTQ characters like

Clarence Polkawitz (voiced by Conan O'Brien), a selfish man, as bisexual, and the gender-flipping possibly genderfluid Tribore Menendez (voiced by Rogers), while Rogers himself said that he would have pushed for Little Cato as a gay character in another season.

Other examples of shows airing on television and streaming platforms were *Duncanville* and *HouseBroken*, which aired on Hulu and FOX. *Duncanville* features a recurring genderfluid character named Mia Abarra (voiced by Rashida Jones), a kiss between one of the protagonists, Annie, and another woman, Sandra, and features background characters mentioning they are in gay relationships in several episodes in the show's newest season. LGBTQ characters were throughout *HouseBroken*, whether a gay trans male cat named Chico, a bisexual mixed-breed terrier Diablo, and the owners of Tabitha, Stelios and Brett, as a same-sex couple. In November, in an episode of *The Simpsons*, a FOX series which has been running since 1989, Smithers was [shown with a new boyfriend](#) who was named Michael de Graaf.

More prominent is *The Owl House*, the first half of the second season which aired on the Disney Channel from June to August, then was added to Disney+ later. While it is aimed at pre-teens, the series is a “deep story with a simple premise” [as one reviewer](#) described it. A second season canonized the semi-canon feelings between a bisexual Afro-Dominican/Afro-Latina young woman named Luz Noceda (voiced by Sarah-Nicole Robles) and a lesbian young woman named Amity Blight, which fans dubbed “[Lumity](#).” It also introduced a new non-binary character named Raine Whispers, voiced by Avi Roque, a non-binary actor, and confirmed that Eda Clawthorne (voiced by Wendie Malick) is queer because she had feelings for Raine, who she previously dated before breaking up, and previously noted she had ex-boyfriends. Furthermore, Mae Whitman, who voices Amity, [came out as pansexual](#). The way forward for *The Owl House* beyond Season 3 is uncertain, as showrunner Dana Terrace [stated in early October](#). Unlike previous Disney shows, which featured LGBTQ actors who generally did not voice LGBTQ characters, *The Owl House* features LGBTQ actors voicing LGBTQ characters, such as Mae Whitman.<sup>6</sup> Another currently airing Disney series, *Big City Greens*, featured two gay characters: Alexander and Terry.

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<sup>6</sup> Other LGBTQ actors who did not voice LGBTQ characters include Matt Lucas as Benny in *Romeo and Juliet*, Rosie O'Donnell as Terk in *Tarzan*, Joshua Rush as Bunga in *Timon & Pumbaa*, Jane Lynch as Sergeant Calhoun in *Wreck-It Ralph*, Harvey Guillén as Funny in *Mickey Mouse Funhouse*, Auli'i Cravalho as Moana in *Moana*, David Hyde Pierce as Francis in *A Bug's Life*, Raven-Symoné as Monique in *Kim Possible*, Jack Dylan Grazer as [Alberto in Luca](#), Sara Ramirez as Queen Miranda in *Sofia the First*, Graham Norton as Moonwind in *Soul*, Miley Cyrus as Penny in *Bolt*, Billy Eichner as Timon in *The Lion King* (2019 remake), Nathan Lane as Timon in *The Lion King*,

Other Disney shows seemed to feature LGBTQ characters as well. In one episode of *Amphibia* there were two women who were coded based on the bisexual and pansexual flags, according to the [show's art director](#), named Jess and Ally. Latina comedian Melissa Villaseñor, who is of Mexican descent, voiced the latter. In another episode, a man was shown proposing to another man. As [Jade King pointed out](#), there is a possibility of confirmed representation between two of the show's protagonists, Anne Boonchuy and Marcy Wang, while there is "chemistry between Yunan and Olivia...teasing...a full relationship between the two." There was even an episode which [a song by Rebecca Sugar](#), creator of *Steven Universe*, was shown.

In two episodes of *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, a lesbian character named Ms. Roop, who is voiced [by Jane Lynch](#), a lesbian woman, is shown. In the episode "Mazel Tov, Libby!", she is slow dancing with a woman and in the next episode she is shown to be a lesbian. The woman she dancing with is her wife, Pam. Samantha C. King, a director for the show, [said that](#) Roop is a "lesbian who always talks about her wife" and [added](#) that Pam and Roop aren't the only LGBTQ characters, but that there will be "more significant rep later on." Others have even argued that Molly McGee herself is bisexual, [claiming](#) that during a musical sequence in one episode, a bi flag-colored sticker can be seen on Molly's motorcycle helmet, but this is only a unconfirmed theory. One of the show's creators, Bob Roth, one of the show's creators stated as much, urging fans to let the representation "[unfold naturally.](#)"

One indie animation put many of the series on streaming platforms and broadcast television to shame. *Helluva Boss*, at the [head of the indie animation boom](#), continued to air on YouTube. Apart from the established LGBTQ characters like Blitzo (pansexual), Moxxie (bisexual), and Stolas (gay or bisexual), voiced by the openly gay Brandon Rogers, Richard Steven Horvitz, and Bryce Pinkham respectfully, the episode "The Harvest Moon Festival" introduced a trans female character named Sallie May (Millie's sister), who is [voiced by a trans woman](#), Morgana Ignis. Even two male-presenting characters, Blitzo and Stolas shared a kiss at the end of the episode "Truth Seekers." The series can be described as having a tenor of morbid humor and being "[unlike any other animated series](#), indie or mainstream, that has ever been created or has appeared on any platform," unique in its own way. The series also featured, in the next-to-last

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Ellen DeGeneres as Dory in *Finding Dory*, Jonathan Groff as Kristoff in the *Frozen* films, Patti Harrison as Chief of Tail in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, Sean Hayes as Terri Perry in *Monsters University*, Alyson Stoner as Isabella in *Phineas & Ferb*, and David Ogden Stiers and Ian McKellen as Cogsworth.

episode of the show's first season, Blitzo and Stolas going on a date together, although it did not work out for either of them, as Stolas can't spell out why exactly he loves Blitzo, with both leaving each other behind. This series is prominent in the indie animation scene and one of the few [queer female-led series](#), unlike other series which have wonderful representation but are not headed by queer people.

Otherwise, *My Life is Worth Living*, a series which is meant to use "relatable teen stories to teach suicide prevention strategies." It [includes stories](#) which cover "LGBTQ+ issues, substance abuse, sexual abuse, and physical injury" and has [aired on YouTube](#) since September 2021. LGBTQ characters include Scott, a public speaker revealed to be gay in *Dante's Story* and Dante, a high school football player who has struggled to come out. On October 11, [the newest episode](#) of Nico Colaleo's series, *Ollie & Scoops*, premiered on YouTube. In the episode before that, which aired on October 22 of 2020, it centered on the history of a teacher, Binnie, who is "anxious and nervous to tell another teacher, Wendy, that she likes her," with Colaleo [promising that there will more](#) of both characters in future episodes.

Many anime led the way when it came to representation. For instance, the original net animation, *Assault Lily Bouquet: Fruits*, based on *Assault Lily Bouquet*, had homoerotic focus, while the ongoing series *My Next Life as a Villainess: All Routes Lead to Doom!* featured a bisexual harem of men and women who pin after the protagonist, Catarina Claus. In 2021 five series with LGBTQ characters began. *High-Rise Invasion* featured two protagonists who begin as friends but become [romantically involved](#) with one another, while *Otherside Picnic* centered on two women who have feelings for each other. In the latter case, however, their feelings are only implied as they never kiss or even directly say they love each other, leading [some critics](#) to say that they can't think of the show as anything more than "just another generic supernatural anime."

Trans characters appeared in *So I'm A Spider, So What?* and *Wonder Egg Priority*. A non-binary character appeared in the series, *Blue Period*, who is misgendered and mocked by her classmates, and yuri content was present in both *Sailor Moon Eternal* movies, with two lesbian characters having a role: Sailor Neptune and Sailor Uranus. The series *Komi Can't Communicate* includes a character with an ambiguous gender and another character, a woman, who is infatuated with the series protagonist. Some reviewers pointed to yuri coding in other series, like *Vlad Love*, *Blue Reflection Ray*, *Kiniro Mosaic*, *Vivy*, *YuYuYu*, *Zombieland Saga: Revenge*, and

*Battle Athletes*, [while noting](#) the final season of *Kobayashi-san Chi no Maid Dragon S*, calling the latter the “one of the most ridiculous and entertaining yuri-ish anime...in some time.” There are also implied yuri tensions between the protagonists of *The Aquatope on White Sand* with one reviewer for *Anime News Network* saying that they are considering the series “to be a yuri series” and calling it “[yuri-coded right from the start](#),” while another saying they are setting their “yuri expectations...[fairly low](#)” for the show, but are [still planning](#) on watching it anyway.

January of this year will see [the premiere](#) of the new season of *Princess Connect! Re:Dive*, along with [Luminous Witches](#) and [Love Live Superstar!](#), all of which may have yuri subtext. In early February 2022, [The Legend of Vox Machina](#), an adult animated fantasy series based on a *Critical Role* campaign, will begin airing on Amazon Prime. It will include two [bisexual siblings](#) (Vex’ahlia “Vex” de Rolo and Vax’ildan “Vax” Vessar), and two queer characters (Keyleth of the Air Ashari and Scanlan Shorthalt).

There are several animated series with LGBTQ representation that are either scheduled to air or presumed to air in 2022. This includes the reboot series *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, which [will have](#) an interracial gay couple ([Barry and Randall Leibowitz-Jenkins](#)), part 4 of *Disenchantment*, and the fourth season of *The Dragon Prince*. The latter show has featured supporting characters who are gay, non-binary, and lesbian. *Arcane* may also be coming back for another season sometime in 2022, although the exact date is not currently known, as will, presumably, [Volume 9 of RWBY](#).

It is also expected that [Dead End: Paranormal Park](#), previously named *DeadEndia*, will premiere sometime this year as well, after it was pushed back from its original premiere of October of 2021. *Dead End: Paranormal Park*, when it premieres, will break barriers with a trans male protagonist, Barney, with series creator Hamish Steele [hoping](#) it would get “more trans creators getting their chance to tell their stories” while hinting at other LGBTQ characters in the show apart from Barney. Steele also, in a [thread on Twitter](#), described overt trans representation as important to him for a number of reasons, but due to the show being a UK production since UK broadcasters [had rejected](#) his previous trans storylines, and [hoped](#) that the series can be “one production taking a clear stand against the normalisation of transphobia in this country [the UK],” with the series having, in his words, “multiple trans cast and crew.” Hopefully the series will continue to increase [positive queer representation in kids animation](#).

There are [indie animations in development](#) which will likely begin or continue this year. This may include new episodes of Nico Colaleo's series, *Ollie & Scoops*, the premiere of *S.A.L.E.M.: The Secret Archive of Legends, Enchantments, and Monsters*,<sup>7</sup> and a new season of *Hazbin Hotel* on A24. Colaleo has already stated this, saying there would be “[much more](#)” *Ollie & Scoops*, while Hazbin fans were annoyed at much of the pilot cast [not returning](#) in the animated series which seems all but guaranteed to [premiere this year](#).

HBO Max’s *Lumberjanes*, an animated adaption of the comic of the same name which [ended in December 2020](#), will [likely not air this year](#), but it is possible the litany of indie animations will air. This will not include *Rain: The Animated Series* as it was cancelled in September 2021 before the series premiere in [a re-upload](#) of one the show’s animations for unspecified reasons. The creators of the indie series, *The Descendants*, [said](#) they will pitch their series this year, with the show creator [declaring](#) that people need to create their dreams.

However, there are indie series moving forward, with no sign of cancellation. *Indigo*, with its development presumed after a previous cancellation, *Wild Card*, which has [an openly bisexual protagonist](#), Jack, [based on the show’s bisexual creator](#), Alex Bahrawy and *Sheepish*, with a non-binary protagonist, are only a few of many indie series with LGBTQ protagonists which are currently in development.<sup>8</sup> *Wild Card* [seems](#) to be moving closer and closer toward premiering the pilot, at least, as does [Far Fetched Show](#).

I hope that [Mika A. Epstein of LezWatch.TV](#) is right in arguing that in terms of representation, this year, “things will get better” and fandoms will develop as ways to express the love people have “[for a story or a movie of a TV show](#),” with shows which [take risks, are daring](#), and tell diverse stories of various types.

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<sup>7</sup> In this series, Salem, protagonist, is non-binary and pan, while Oliver is gay, and Petra is asexual.

<sup>8</sup> Others include *Dirt: The Series*, *Romancing Roslyn Cherry*, *Howdy Cloudboy*, *Gadzooks and the Cryptoid Kids* (a series by two gay men with LGBTQ themes), *Roads to Rome*, *Succubus Cop*, *Starmakers*, *Cabiria Intermezzo*, and *Long Way From Del’Arte*.

## Chapter 3: Things Get Better?: LGBTQ Representation in Animation in 2022



*Komichi Akebi of Akebi's Sailor Uniform happily welcomes all the LGBTQ animated shows in this article. Logos of my favorite anime with LGBTQ themes which aired throughout 2022 are shown in this graphic which I created*

In January 2022, [I wrote](#) that there was a possibility that in 2022 things would "get better" in terms of LGBTQ representation, with new fandoms developing from shows which take risks by telling diverse stories. Although 2022, in some regards, more than lived up to this possibility and went beyond, there were challenges.

In the world of anime, some series with implied, or directly represented, LGBTQ characters, ended.<sup>9</sup> Often times these series had yuri themes. For instance, there were somewhat strong

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<sup>9</sup> Some could say that the final season of *Princess Connect! Re:Dive* has yuri subtext and point to the second season of *Dota: Dragon's Blood* featuring an Elven thief named Fymrym, who was once in a polyamorous relationship with a woman and two men, with her partners [murdered by Luna](#), who attacks the Elves who don't worship Selemene. Also, *Komi Can't Communicate* featured Najimi Osana who has an ambiguous gender and Ren Yamai who is a lesbian, a bisexual man named Apollo in *Is It Wrong to Try to Pick Up Girls in a Dungeon?*, gay characters like

undertones between the protagonist, Komichi Akebi, and her friend, Erika Kizaki, in *Akebi's Sailor Uniform*, and [the protagonists](#) of *The Demon Girl Next Door*, Yuko Yoshida and Momo Chiyoda, and those of the short-lived, but intriguing, yuri isekai, *The Executioner and Her Way of Life*. In the [latter series](#), one of the protagonists, Akari Tokitō, has a crush on Menou, a female assassin with a duty to kill her. At the same time, Menou's aide, Momo, has a crush on her and is jealous of how close she is getting to Akari.

One series, [\*Birdie Wing: Golf Girls' Story\*](#), blew representation out of the water, with strong romantic themes between Eve and a Japanese girl she plays golf against, Aoi Amawashi. Eve is often unaware of how romantic she is toward Aoi, who has a clear crush on her. Erica Friedman of *Okazu*, a well-known reviewer who focuses on lesbian themes in anime, [even wrote](#) that she may "start measuring other anime based on how amazing this one was". Other series ranged from having implied to more direct themes, including *Vampire in the Garden*, *Do it Yourself!!*, *Bocchi the Rock!*, *Healer Girl*, *Lycoris Recoil*, and [\*Mobile Suit Gundam: The Witch from Mercury\*](#).

There were additional anime with LGBTQ themes or characters. For instance, *Life with an Ordinary Guy who Reincarnated into a Total Fantasy Knockout*, which had a three-month run from January to March 2022, featured a reincarnated protagonist, Hinata Tachibana, who is heavily implied to be a bisexual trans woman. The [spinoff](#) from the popular Rooster Teeth series, *RWBY*, named *RWBY: Ice Queendom*, featured a non-binary nightmare hunter, Shion Zaiden. Christine Brent, Senior Brand Director for Rooster Teeth, [confirmed](#) this and said she would like to have similar characters in future productions.

Apart from these series, there were implied yuri themes in the ongoing idol series *Love Live! Superstar!!* and second season of *Love Live! Nijigasaki High School Idol Club*. Such themes were also present in *Management of Novice Alchemist*, *Encouragement of Climb: Next Summit*, *KanColle: Itsuka Ano Umi de*, *My Master Has No Tail*, *Prima Doll*, *Smile of the Arsnotoria the Animation*, *Shine Post*, and many others,<sup>10</sup> all of which began, and ended, in 2022.

Many of these series are on Crunchyroll, one of the biggest anime streaming services. With its recent merger with Funimation, Crunchyroll now [dominates](#) the anime streaming market, and

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Nagi and Soldier in *Goblins Cave and Suma* in *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*. *Attack on Titan* has LGBTQ characters as well, as does *One Piece*.

<sup>10</sup> Others, as listed on Yuri Anime Reviews, include *Teppen!!!!!!!!!!!! Laughing 'Til You Cry*, *League of Nations Air Force Aviation Magic Band Luminous Witches*, *Kakegurui Twin*, *Magia Record: Puella Magi Madoka Magica Side Story Final Season*, *RPG Real Estate*, *Miss Shachiku and the Little Baby Ghost*, *Black Rock Shooter: Dawn Fall*, *Cue!*, *Slow Loop*, and *Girls' Frontline*.

will likely continue crackdowns [on pirate sites](#). Its only real competition is YouTube, smaller sites like HIDIVE (owned by AMC), and [streaming services](#) such as Netflix, Tubi, and Hulu.



In 2022, there was a plethora of LGBTQ characters in Western animation, from gay warriors Orc and Iago in *Battle Kitty* to a lesbian drama teacher in Dee Dee Holloway [in \*Big Nate\*](#). Other series featured gay couples (as [in \*Baymax!\*](#)), gay and lesbian parents (as [in \*Firebuds\*](#)), and many other lesbian, bisexual, non-binary, and queer characters.<sup>11</sup>

Some series had more representation than others. One of these was *The Legend of Vox Machina*, airing on Amazon Prime and based on the Critical Role roleplaying podcast, which featured lesbian, bisexual, and queer characters, specifically Vex'ahlia "Vex" de Rolo, Vax'ildan "Vax" Vessar, Lady Kima, Keyleth of the Air Ashari, Scanlan Shorthalt, and Lady Allura Vysoren. Stephanie Beatriz, a bisexual actress, voiced two of these characters: Lady Kima and Lady Allura. In addition, there were was a reboot of *Monster High* which premiered on

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<sup>11</sup> This includes lesbian characters Nadja el-Koury and Danielle [in \*Human Resources\*](#), Laura Feinberg as a bisexual woman [in \*Little Demon\*](#), a queer non-binary couple (Gladys and Wren) [in \*Pinecone & Pony\*](#), a non-binary Faerie student [named Jae](#) in *Supernatural Academy*, and a non-binary transformer [named Nightshade](#) in *Transformers: EarthSpark*. In addition, [Dragon Age: Absolution](#), which only aired for six episodes in December 2022, featured four of LGBTQ characters (Miriam, Hira, Roland, and Lacklon), with Qwydion voiced [by Ashly Burch](#) who came out as queer and pansexual [in July 2022](#).

Nickelodeon in [fall 2022](#), with more gender diversity and LGBTQ characters, such as a non-binary monster named Frankie Stein and two lesbian moms (Medusa and Lyra).

Just as powerful was [the reboot of \*The Proud Family\*](#) in a series named *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*. It aired on Disney+ from February to April of 2022. Created by the same person as the original, Bruce W. Smith, it includes three gay characters: Randall Leibowitz-Jenkins, Barry Leibowitz-Jenkins, and Michael Collins. There were also one-time lesbian characters and queer vibes among other characters, who are part of the show's [mostly Black cast](#).

One of these characters is Maya, a 14-year-old anti-racist activist [voiced by Keke Palmer](#). Although Palmer is an actress who has described herself [as sexually fluid](#) and queer, it [remains](#) to be seen whether Maya will be "sexually fluid and queer as much as Palmer is in real-life."

This was followed, later in 2022, by the much-expected *Dead End: Paranormal Park*, which Netflix [recently cancelled](#). This series broke barriers as the first animated series with a trans protagonist named Barney Guttman. He is voiced by a trans male actor, Zach Barack. The show also includes Norma Khan who likes multiple genders and is ambiguously queer, and Courtney, who is non-binary. This series goes beyond the barrier-breaking [of \*High Guardian Spice\*](#), a series by a trans male creator, Raye Rodriguez, who voiced one of the show's characters (Caraway), or the trans male lead character in *Wendell & Wild* (Raúl Cocolotl), who was said to be the first trans man in an animated film.

2022 heralded the end of the much-beloved Disney series, *Amphibia*. The series featured LGBTQ characters who were confirmed after the show's finale, like bisexual Sasha Waybright, voiced by bisexual actress Anna Akana. There's also Mr. X, Frodrick Toadstool, and Toadie who are gay, Yunan and Lady Olivia who are lesbian, Ally who is pansexual, and Jess who is bisexual.

Just as bombastic is the third season of *Harley Quinn* headlined by two bisexual protagonists, Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy. Both are known by the ship name Harlivy. The season, premiering from July to September 2022. The series also features a queer character named Clayface, who works with Harley from time to time. *Harley Quinn* was [recently renewed](#) for a fourth season, with a standalone episode premiering sometime this year.



There are other Western animated series with LGBTQ characters. For instance, *Craig of the Creek* features Kelsey Pokoly and Isabella "Stacks" Alvarado, two lesbian characters who have an important role in the series. There are additional LGBTQ characters in *Summer Camp Island* and *Victor and Valentino*. In the latter series are episodes partially focusing on the relationship between Xochi Jalapeno and Amabel. The former series has at least four LGBTQ characters: Puddle, Alien King, and Ghosts Dads as noted by the *Insider* [database](#) of LGBTQ characters and cartoons, which was last updated in June 2021.

All three of these series were targeted by Warner Bros Discovery execs. *Summer Camp Island* and *Victor and Valentino* [were removed](#) from the HBO Max streaming platform. *Craig of the Creek* had its final season order [cut in half by execs](#), worrying those who worked on the show. These shows were not alone. In 2022, three other series with LGBTQ characters also faced the axe from corporate executives: [\*Tuca & Bertie\*](#), [\*The Casagrandes\*](#), and [\*Close Enough\*](#).

In 2022, some months after the fourth season ended, shenanigans by Warner Bros Discovery execs led to the [effective cancellation](#) of *Young Justice*. The series includes LGBTQ characters such as Eduardo "Ed" Dorado Jr., Kaldur, and Marie Logan. Lagoon Boy "La'gaan" was shown to be bisexual and in a poly relationship in the recent season. Bart Allen is in a relationship with Ed, and Wynnde is in a relationship with Kaldur.

The show [features](#) Harper Row who is bisexual, Rosa who is trans woman, and Violet who is non-binary. In the most recent season, there was a sub-story showing Violet beginning a romantic relationship with Harper Row. Unfortunately, without another season, these stories could not be expanded.

Other series shined through in their representation. This included *The Dragon Prince*. There are lesbian (Amaya and Janai), non-binary (Kazi), and otherwise queer (Annika, Ethari, Neha, and Runaan), characters. The story of Amaya and Junai was an important part of the story in the show's recent fourth season, becoming [more](#) than "lip service" regardless of how bad other [narrative choices](#) in the season were, with this story likely continued in the show's next three seasons.

The same can be said for the mature animated series, *Disenchantment*, which [features](#) the bisexual Princess Bean, voiced by a bisexual actress, Abbi Jacobson, and [various characters](#) in *Star Trek: Lower Decks*.<sup>12</sup> The latter series, its third season airing from August to September 2022, has a bisexual protagonist named Beckett Mariner, a possibly asexual chief engineer named Andy Billups, and a lesbian woman named Jennifer Sh'reyan. The relationship, and subsequent break-up of Mariner and Sh'reyan was an important part of the recent season, which featured Mariner as a protagonist.

There were other characters of note, like the confirmed lesbian relationship [in Arcane](#) between two characters (Vi and Caitlyn) and many characters in another ongoing series, *The Owl House*. This includes the now-canon romantic relationship between Luz Noceda, who is bisexual, and Amity Blight, who is lesbian. The show featured other LGBTQ characters, whether those who are queer (Eda Clawthorne), aromantic asexual (Lilith Clawthorne), gay (Gilbert Park and Harvey Park), non-binary and transmasculine (Raine Whispers), and presumably non-binary character named The Collector.

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<sup>12</sup> There were gay characters in *Kid Cosmic* (Fry and Hamburg), *The Great North* (Ham Tobin and Crispin Cienfuegos), *Jellystone!*, *Chicago Party Aunt* (Daniel and Gideon), *Close Enough* (Randall "Randy" Watson), *Invincible* (William Francis Clockwell), *Big City Greens* (Alexander and Terry), *Baby Shark's Big Show!* (Viv and Vera), *Undone* (Alejandro Diaz), and *Pete The Cat* (Sam and Syd), along with lesbian characters in *Little Ellen*, *The Ghost and Molly McGee* (Mrs. Roop and Pan), the new *Rugrats* (Betty DeVille), *Tuca & Bertie*, *The Casagrandes* (Becky). In addition, non-binary characters appeared in *Ridley Jones* (Fred) and *Madagascar: A Little Wild* (Odee Elliott) while genderless characters had roles in *Star Trek: Prodigy* (Zero) and *Solar Opposites* (Korvo and Terry), and a trans woman is a character in *Peepodo & the Super Fuck Friends* (Evelyn). There were an assortment of LGBTQ characters in *Big Mouth*, *The Loud House*, *Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug & Cat Noir*, *Bob's Burgers*, *Bee and PuppyCat*, *Rick and Morty*, *RWBY*, *Hey Duggee*, *American Dad!*, *Red vs. Blue*, *South Park*, *Family Guy*, *Spongebob*, *The Simpsons*, and *Archer*.



While some shows with LGBTQ characters, have ended (*Kid Cosmic* and *Amphibia*), were cancelled (*Q-Force*), or won't be renewed (*Dead End*, *gen:LOCK*, and *High Guardian Spice*), indie animation has continued to shine. Some argued that people shouldn't look to Disney for queer representation in animation, that there [may be a decline](#) of superhero shows where many queer characters are, and noted [a limited](#) number of out TV stars out there. Although by midway through the year LGBTQ representation looked grim, due to what I've mentioned earlier, indie animations made clear that queerness [is normal](#), just as it should be in real life.

None of these indie animations would even be recognized [by GLAAD](#), which [recently promoted](#) the animated series *Chicago Party Aunt*, and animated films,<sup>13</sup> and with their nominees for the GLAAD Media Award, blogposts, and annual reports, nor by queer feminist magazines [like Autostraddle](#), a queer feminist magazine. Instead, fans and supporters have recognized them. This includes those such as *Helluva Boss*, *Ollie & Scoops*, *Eddsworld*, a new season of *Hazbin Hotel* in development, along with others in development like *The Descendants*, *Wild Card*, [Far Fetched](#), and *Indigo*, to name a few.

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<sup>13</sup> [Strange World](#) featured a gay couple: Ethan Clade and Diazo. In 2022, there were been bisexual and lesbian characters in *Catwoman* (specifically Catwoman and Batwoman), queer characters in *Turning Red* ([Priya Mangal](#)), a lesbian woman in *Lightyear* ([Alisha Hawthorne](#)), along with lesbian women in *DC League of Super-Pets* (Nancy), and *Trick or Treat Scooby-Doo!* (Velma Dinkley and Coco Diablo).

In the year ahead, there are bound to be more LGBTQ series, with the premiere of the yuri series *The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady* [in January](#), the second season [of D4DJ](#) in January, the new series *Yuri Is My Job!* [in April](#), and the new season of *Birdie Wing*, also in April. Another yuri series, *I'm in Love with the Villainess* is also [set to air](#) this year, while the sci-fi yuri manga, *Hoshikuzu Telepath*, is [in development](#). This is coupled with continued release of yuri manga, visual novels, and the planned release of Love Live! anime spinoffs *Nijiyon Animation* and [Genjitsu no Yohane: Sunshine in the Mirror](#). Both will likely have yuri subtext in line with other Love Live! anime series, which only have women as characters. There are indications that anime adaptations of [Hikikomari Kyuuketsuki no Monmon](#) aka *The Vexations of a Shut-In Vampire Princess*, [Whisper Me A Love Song](#), [Young Ladies Don't Play Fighting Games](#), and *Vampeerz* may be premiering this year.

Despite these positives, I worry that LGBTQ representation in animation, this year, may wane, in line with [declining representation](#) in film. For Western animation, what shows can fill the void left by *The Owl House*, *Amphibia*, *Kid Cosmic*, *Dead End*, *gen:LOCK*, *High Guardian Spice*, or even *Q-Force*? It's hard to know if existing series can fill that gap. In anime, there is more possibilities, due to the aforementioned yuri series, and any possible yaoi (boy's love) series.

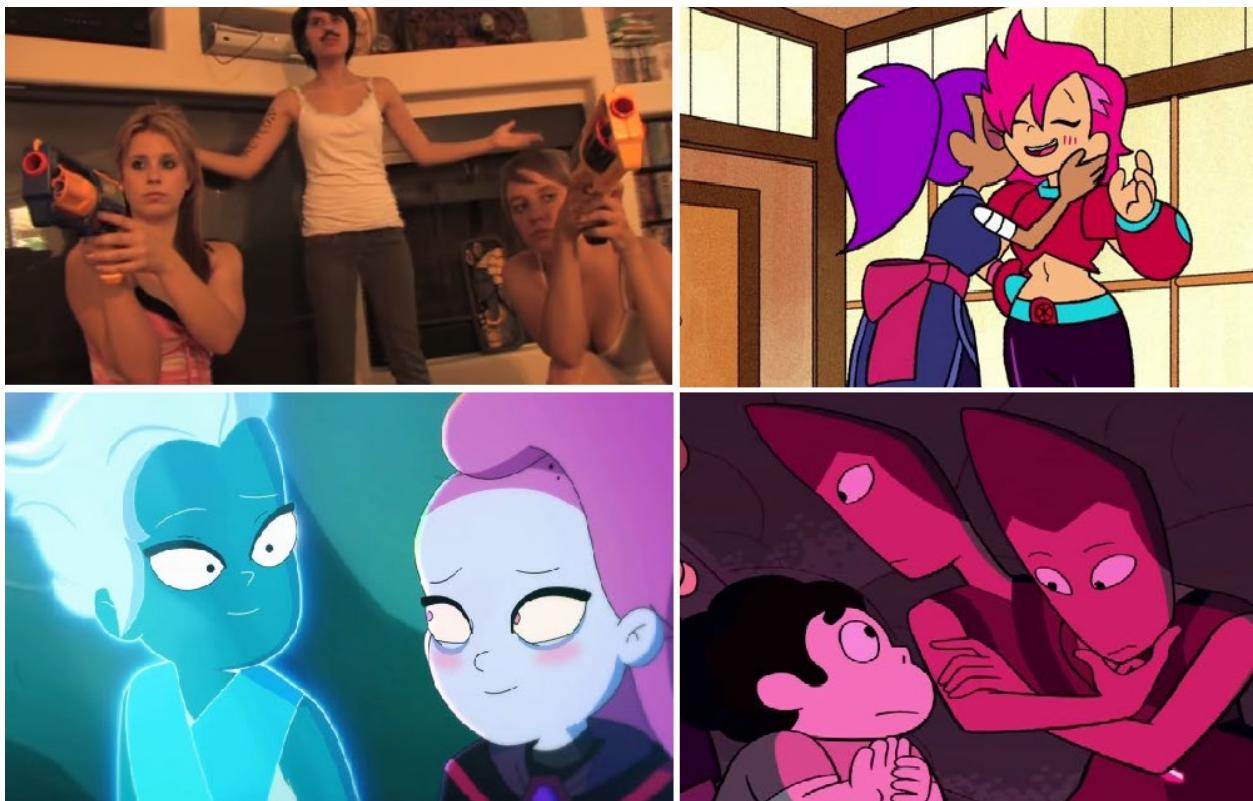
However, there is some hope for representation in Western animation. The next season of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* is coming in February, along with *Ark: The Animated Series* which features a lesbian protagonist, the animated series *Princess Power* and *Velma* in January, and the *Nimona* animated film in the summer. New seasons of *Witch from Mercury*, *Arcane*, *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, *The Great North*, *Invincible*, *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, and *Disenchantment* may premiere. The pilot episode of *S.A.L.E.M.: The Secret Archive of Legends, Enchantments, and Monsters* or the film which precedes the *Lumberjanes* series might air.

There might be new information about [an animated series](#) set after *The Legend of Korra*, which had two bisexual protagonists (Asami and Korra), which will focus on an unnamed earthbender, a film centered around Korra [said to be released](#) in 2026. There might be LGBTQ characters in *Kiff*, *Hailey's On It!*, and *Iwájú*, which are scheduled to begin airing this year, or those in future series such as *Primos*, *Moana*, *Tiana*, and *Iyanu: Child of Wonder*.

Animation may continue to be in a bit of a rough patch and more may flock to indie animation in hopes of finding an alternative to the studio system. That is what can be easily predicted for this year.

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## Chapter 4: Ashly Burch's Contribution to LGBTQ+ Representation



*Four of Ashly Burch's roles, all of which are canon LGBTQ characters*

Recently, Ashly Burch, a well-recognized voice actress, singer, and writer, came out as pan and queer. Considering this development, I decided to examine some of her past roles and offer my thoughts on her contributions.

On July 1st, Ashly Burch came out as pan and queer, saying she is "old fashioned pansexual". She added that this is not a shock because half the characters she plays are "members of the rainbow fam" and added more in [a longer thread](#).

Burch has added herself to the list of other LGBTQ+ voice actors [who have voiced](#) LGBTQ+ characters in media. There's Anna Akana, a bisexual actress of Japanese and Filipino descent. She recently voiced Sasha Waybright in *Amphibia* and Daisy in *Magical Girl Friendship Squad*. Both characters are bisexual.

A non-binary actor, Iris Menas, has voiced non-binary characters in various Disney series. Ian-Jones Quartey, a bisexual creator, has voiced various characters, including Radicles

"Rad" in his series, *OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes*. Abbi Jacobson, a bisexual actress, voiced a [bisexual princess](#) named Bean in *Disenchantment*. She also voiced a lesbian woman named Katie Mitchell in *The Mitchells Vs. the Machines*.

In many ways, Burch is a queer icon. Apart from her video game voice roles, live-action roles, commercial roles, and dubbing roles, there [are five roles](#) that stand out to me. This article focuses on those roles and their significance in LGBTQ+ representation.

### Ash in *Hey Ash Whatcha Playin'*



Ashly with her beauties in [Season 1 - Finale Part 1](#) of *Hey Ash Whatcha Playin'*

In May 2008, the series *Hey Ash Whatcha Playin'* first premiered on Destructoid. It would garner tens of millions of views. [The series](#) used surreal humor and sibling rivalry with her brother Anthony. Each episode focused on video games, and their themes, trends, and societal impacts. In 2011, the series began airing [on YouTube](#). Papa Burch, Burch's actual father, and Ashley "Leigh" Davis, who becomes Anthony's girlfriend, also appear. Guest stars include Burch's mother and many others.

Many episodes had queer themes. One implies that Burch [had sex](#) with sex workers. In another, she says things can be "[really gay](#)" when everything becomes male genitalia. The icing

on the cake was when she [struggled with the homophobia](#) exhibited by Orson Scott Card, whose ideas inspired the game, *Shadow Complex*.

In the show's second season, Anthony had gay sex [through a message board](#). Ashly asked her dad [for help](#) with "lady problems" (i.e. liking a lot of women). Some episodes had Ashly joking about how brains are "gay" and defending her brother as a person who doesn't bash gay people. Others included dildos, Papa Burch coming up with imagined gay scenarios, or defense of female characters.

One episode stands out from the lot, the one where Ashly [says](#) she likes pretty girls and runs away when she sees a girl she likes. Later episodes have Ash loving a female villain-of-sorts or portray her losing her cool when people use the word "lesbians".

#### Enid in *OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes*



Enid (left) and Red Action (right) in an episode of *OK K.O.!*

Burch is known for [her role](#) as Enid Mettle [in this](#) action-adventure-comedy animated series by Ian Jones-Quartey, Rebecca Sugar's husband. In the series, Enid is a bisexual woman previously in a relationship with Radicles "Rad". She is later Red Action's girlfriend.

Enid has [a key role](#) in *OK K.O.!* as a witch and a ninja all in one. She also fights villains and works at Gar's Bodega. Burch has voiced Enid in [almost](#) all her appearances apart from the original pilot. She has been the subject of much fan art and [over 700 fan fics](#).

Somewhat like Enid is Lainey in *Loud House*, who Burch also voiced. Lainey is dating another character, a woman named Alice. Unlike *OK K.O.!*, Lainey only appears in two episodes. In the former series, she becomes very romantic with Red Action, a lesbian character voiced by actress, comedian, and model [Kali Hawk](#).

### Ash in *Final Space*



*Evra (left) and Ash (right) in an episode of Final Space*

Burch is less known for [her role](#) as Ash Graven, who has the same first name as her. In the series, Ash is [a humanoid alien](#) who strikes up a romance with Evra (Jasmin Savoy Brown), a genderless being, in the Season 3 episode "Forgiveness". They sit together in a romantic moment, watching lights that resemble the aurora borealis.

Before this, she says she hates a man named Jordan Hammerstein with all her guts. This hints that [she is a lesbian](#) rather than "ambiguously bi," as I noted in [my review](#) of the series. In that review, I noted a podcast where show creator Olan Rogers confirmed Ash as an LGBTQ

character. At the time, Rogers said he would expand the relationship between Evra and Ash if he had another season.

Ash is only one of the many LGBTQ characters in the series, although the others are recurring characters rather than protagonists. Unlike Enid, she becomes an antagonist, and villain, akin to Cassandra "Cass" (Eden Espinosa) in *Tangled*. She is a character as complex as Cass while both are exploited by someone else who [plays on her trauma triggers](#).

### Rutile Twins in *Steven Universe*



*Rutile Twins* (right) brings Lars and Steven to the Prime Kindergarten where Off Colors are hiding out [in their debut episode](#).

In a little-known role, Burch voiced a non-binary Gem fusion named Rutile Twins [in Steven Universe](#). She later said she was "[extremely honored](#)" to be on the show. Unlike the other characters [she voiced](#), these characters are non-binary women, as are all Gems as Rebecca Sugar confirmed in [a 2018 article](#). So that makes this character unique beyond any others mentioned in her resume.

In an interesting trivia, since Burch voices both components of the character, they have the same voice, but with different tones. The same is the case for the Amethysts, all voiced by

Michaela Dietz, or all the Rubies voiced by Charlyne Yi. Real-life rutiles [are said](#) to help with the stabilization of emotions and relationships. They reportedly evoke romantic feelings and aid with handling past trauma.

The Rutile Twins are outcasts who are part of a group of Gems ostracized by society, the Off Colors. These Twins later join Lars Barriga, and the other Off Colors, traveling through space, and living on Earth. In *Steven Universe Future*, the Off Colors graduate from Steven's school for Gems, known as Little Homeschool.

### ***Molly in The Ghost and Molly McGee***



*Andrea (left) and Molly (right) in the "[Andrea Song Takeover](#)"*

Burch voices a lead character named Molly McGee. Unlike her other roles, Molly is half-Thai and half-Irish, like Burch in real life. The series incorporates Thai culture into storylines and helps educate viewers about Thai culture.

In *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, Molly befriends a ghost named Scratch after moving to the Midwestern town of Brighton with her father, mother, and brother. Also appearing in the series is Molly's grandmother. She meets many friends there. This includes a Latine and Jewish

girl named Libby Stein-Torres (Lara Jill Miller). She also has a geeky friend Sheela (Aparna Nancherla) and a sweet pink-haired friend, Kat (Eden Riegel).

Although Molly is not a canon queer character, some fans have shipped her with her frenemy, Andrea Davenport (Jules Medcraft), with their ship being Mollandrea. Others have shipped her with Libby Stein-Torres, with their ship called Mollibby. This ship [has been denied](#) by Bob Roth, a show creator, who said that LGBTQ representation [unfolds naturally](#) in the series.

### Closing thoughts

There are many other characters Burch has voiced or played since her career began in 2007. She voiced Josette Grey [in Blackford Manor](#) and Tiny Ghost [in Chainsaw Richard](#). She offered her voice as Lila Twinklepipes in *Pig Goat Banana Cricket*, Meadow Springs in *Trolls: The Beat Goes On!*, and Miss Pauling in *Expiration Date*, along with others in *Over the Garden Wall* and *We Bare Bears*.

She is further known for voicing Bun Bun and Breezy in *Adventure Time*, Ridley [in Glitch Techs](#), and Cass Wizard in *Bee and PuppyCat*. Recently, she played Rachel in *Mythic Quest* who is in a relationship with a Black woman named Dana (Imani Hakim).

Many of these roles aren't canon LGBTQ+ characters. However, since Burch came out as pan and queer, this could lead to new interpretations of these characters. Burch was also a writer for "Shadows at the Gates", the fourth episode of *The Legend of Vox Machina*, a mature animated series filled with LGBTQ+ characters and based on the *Critical Role* podcast.

In the end, Ashly Burch will likely continue to [voice queer characters](#), working with other such actors to continue improving queer representation in media.

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## Chapter 5: Reviewing Queer Animated Characters With Trauma



*Amity fights Hunter in a season 2 episode of The Owl House*

Recently, there has been a growing number of queer fictional animated characters with trauma. I decided to examine this trend and offer my thoughts.

Trauma is a common theme in fiction. This makes sense especially for conflict-prone series, either in live-action or animation. Recent years have made this even more pronounced as animation holds an "[exceptional potential](#)" to portray trauma, an emotional response to a distressing experience of some kind, unlike other mediums.

I'll examine over 20 characters, who are either confirmed as part of the LGBTQ community or implied as such. The characters described in this article are only a small sample of a larger list of characters. I've only chosen characters in Western animated shows that I have watched to date, as a similar post on anime characters would be as long as this one.

This post contains spoilers for the series that I'm writing about. With that, let me get started!

## *The Owl House*



*Luz and Amity dance together as their magic causes the grom monster to explode behind them*

This fantasy and horror comedy [animated series](#) has trauma at its core. It emphasizes the importance of chosen family and discovering who you are as a person.

The show's protagonist, Luz Noceda (Sarah Nicole-Robles) ends up in a magical world called the Boiling Isles. It is far away from her home, and she soon has no way of returning. While she makes friends along the way, what happens to her is, at times, traumatic. In fact, one reviewer [even stated](#) that nearly every resident of the Owl House, including Eda Clawthorne (Wendie Malick), King (Alex Hirsch), and Luz, have post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD.

By the second season of the series, Luz has begun a romantic relationship with Amity Blight (Mae Whitman). Luz is [confirmed](#) as bisexual by the show's creator, Dana Terrace, while Amity is a lesbian. Her voice actor [is pansexual](#). Additionally, Eda is queer as she was in a relationship with Raine Whispers, a non-binary head witch of the Bard Covern. The voice actor of Raine, Avi Roque, is non-binary as well.

There's also Eda's sister, Lilith, who was [recently implied](#) as being asexual by her voice actor, Cissy Jones, the dads of Willow Park (Tati Gabrielle), Gilbert and Harvey, and the

mysterious god-like creature named The Collector. The show's creator may have implied the character is non-binary in [a recent tweet](#).

All these characters, and every other character in the series, have trauma on some level. Even the series villain, Emperor Belos (Matthew Rhys), has a mind [filled with decades](#) of "triumph, trauma, and loss."

### *Amphibia*



Anne (left) and Sasha (right) fight in the season two finale

This [recently-concluded series](#) may seem harmless at first, but there is more below the surface. The three protagonists, Anne Boonchuy (Brenda Song), Marcy Wu (Haley Tju), and Sasha Waybright (Anna Akana) open a magic box. They end up in a wild tropical land known as Amphibia. Their friendship faces strains and hardships, including betrayals, pain, and death.

One of these characters is prominently part of the LGBTQ community: Sasha. Voiced by Akana, a talented voice actress, the show's creator, Matt Braly [confirmed her as bisexual](#) after the show's finale. This built upon [a bisexual sticker](#) on her car's mirror in a final sequence. As it turns out, during an acceptance speech for the Streamy Awards she came out as bisexual, even though she was drunk when she made the speech [since she didn't expect to win the award](#).

Her character begins the series as a jerk, bully, and almost a villain of sorts. Sasha even fights the show's protagonist, Anne, her high school friend, and butts heads with Marcy. She later works to make amends and fights King Andrias who has evil plans to take over the world.

Sasha joins other recurring LGBTQ characters, mostly in the show's last season. This includes Frodrick Toadstool and Toadie who have a gay romance, [confirmed](#) by the show's creator. Also, Yunan and Lady Olivia [become](#) a romantic lesbian couple, while Ally and Jess who run an Internet video channel together. It's also implied that Mr. X, voiced by RuPaul, is gay.

All these characters have some level of trauma in one way or another. At the same time, the series serves as a "form of solace" and can ameliorate trauma often associated with media like [The Owl House](#).

### ***Disenchantment***



*Bean fights with Gretel, a cannibalistic serial killer, in the season one episode "Faster, Princess! Kill! Kill!"*

Although her father, Zog, works through his trauma in the [most recent part](#) of this mature animated series, Bean suffers from trauma as well. This is because events which involve a "serious threat to life...and feel beyond a person's control" fill her life. Examples [include](#) loss of a parent, physical violence, sexual assault, military combat, or death of a loved one.

Through her role as princess, and then queen, these events include her father's live burial, an elevator chopping off the head of her friend, and kidnapping of her friend Elfo. She [isn't alone](#)

[with trauma](#), as her friends also have it as well, as do many other characters within this series. It shows that series is not afraid to tackle mental health as a theme.

In the most recent episodes of this series, she kisses a mermaid named Mora (Meredith Hagner). This romance and [others with male characters](#), including Elfo, indicated she is bisexual or pansexual. She was [directly confirmed](#) as bisexual by an official Netflix account. Furthermore, Bean's voice actress, Abbi Jacobson, is also bisexual.

There are other LGBTQ characters in this series, like Odval and Sorcerio. They are a gay couple who live in the Dreamland castle. It is further implied that Big Jo and Porky may have been in a toxic relationship with one another.

All of them experience physical violence, loss, and serious threats to their lives in many ways.

### ***High Guardian Spice***



*Olive and Rose fight in the 9th episode of this series*

This series [has major themes](#) such as acceptance, togetherness, and discovering one's identity. Rosemary (Briana Leon) has a recurring nightmare where her mother disappeared and

left a magical sword behind. Unsurprisingly, she gets nervous when her locket, which has an important family memory, gets lost.

Rosemary isn't alone. Sage (Lauren White) gets nervous when everything doesn't go according to plan. She ends up questioning if she should be at the magic academy and what "right things" she should say to people. The latter is emblematic of [her social awkwardness](#).

Both are implied as being in love with each other, in what some shippers call Sagemary. Since Rosemary shows an attraction to a male student in one episode, she could be bisexual. One of the show's writers and voice actor of Amaryllis, Katie McVay, [seemed to imply](#) some the show's characters are bisexual. Parsley (Amber Romero) and Thyme (Michelle Deco) might be lesbian characters. The latter has a crush on a mermaid named Coral in one episode.

Anise and Aloe are a lesbian couple. Haviland Stillwell, a lesbian actress, voices Anise. Then there's Professor Caraway who reveals to Rosemary he is a trans man. The show's creator, Raye Rodriguez, who is a Cuban trans man, voices him. Finally, the snarky student Snapdragon appears to be on the road to transitioning toward a trans woman. Julia Kaye, a comics writer and trans woman, voices her.

Traumatic events shape all these characters and many others. This includes queer-coded characters like the catgirl Olive (Stephanie Sheh), Slime Boy (Julian Koster), and professor Wyverna Dretch (Stillwell).

### ***Legend of Korra***



*Korra at a low place at beginning of the show's fourth season*

Trauma fills this classic, but divisive, anime-inspired series. Trauma affects two of the protagonists, Korra and Asami Sato.

Throughout the series, Korra becomes poisoned, physically traumatized, and emotionally scarred. This manifests itself in her losing her bending abilities and having her friends captured or maimed. Through it all she has to continue fighting as the Avatar, with a duty to keep the peace. One reviewer [said](#) that her PTSD storyline is sad, but also "so good", as she survives through her drama which continues to inspire.

This contrasts with Asami. She loses almost everything in the series, from her imprisoned backstabbing father and almost losing her family company. One person [argued](#) that Asami's trauma inspires her to "save others from feeling how she felt." This includes Korra, who confides in Asami as she works through her trauma.

In the show's final episode, and subsequently confirmed by show's creators, Korra and Asami become a romantic couple. This was further shown in the graphic novel *The Legend of Korra: Turf Wars*. The same novel confirmed that Kya, daughter of Katara, is a lesbian. The novel also explores Kyoshi's [bisexual romantic feelings](#).

During the series, Korra and Asami date Mako, a male character, and are good friends with one another. With Korrisami confirmed, both are canonically bisexual.

### *Final Space*



*Ash, imbued with the power of Invictus, prepares to strike Little Cato in the show's final episode*

One of the protagonists of this cancelled mature animated series [manifests trauma](#) more than any other character. Ash Graven (Ashly Burch) is a complex character with a troubled past. Like other protagonists, the destruction of the Earth by the Lord Commander, and near-death experiences, traumatizes her.

Invictus, the show's primary villain, exploits her trauma triggers to significant effect. Like how triggers for people with PTSD manifest themselves, she lashes out, blames others unfairly, retreats, and her emotions flair.

Before this happens, she bonds with a genderless lifeform trapped in Final Space, named Evra (Jasmin Savoy Brown). Their growing relationship makes clear Ash's romantic orientation as a lesbian. Since the show was not renewed, her relationship with Evra did not progress beyond one episode sequence.

Trauma and tragedy scar the memories and lives of every character in this series. This includes a recurring character named Clarence, confirmed by show creator Olan Rogers as bisexual, and Tribore Menendez, who may be genderfluid.

Just as literature can be a "[valid resource](#)" to learn about complex issues like trauma and mental health, with books even playing a role in recovering from mental illness, animated series can tackle the same topics. *Final Space* is one of those series.

### *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



*Fight between Jamack (left) and Wolf (right) in the first episode of this series*

This young adult animated series is set in a post-apocalyptic wasteland known as Las Vistas, set in what is now Los Angeles. Animals have morphed into anthropomorphic characters and humans fled underground to burrows. The show's protagonist, Kipo (Karen Fukuhara) is the series' narrative center and a foil for the "[world's trauma and alienation](#)."

Kipo was never confirmed as part of the LGBTQ community. She [is traumatized](#) as much as any other character and with her troubled past. Some have headcanoned her as queer, but that is pure speculation.

The show's creator, Radford "Rad" Sechrist [said](#) he never thought of Kipo as LGBTQ. She was [recently confirmed](#) as a Blasian character. It wasn't [directly stated](#) in the series due to a

worry by Sechrist of "whitewashing and lightening black characters". This led to a bit of a hullabaloo online after his clunky response.

She is not the only character who is afflicted by trauma. For instance, there's Benson Mekler (Coy Stewart) and Troy Sandoval (Giullian Yao Gioiello). Both later begin a romantic relationship. Sechrist hinted Troy as [pansexual](#) at one point. There's additionally Asher Berdacs who is non-binary and voiced by River Butcher, a non-binary actor. Each of them has their own childhood traumas, as does Kipo's friend, Wolf (Sydney Mikayla) and many other characters.

Even a mandrill named Scarlemagne (Dan Stevens), who wants to subjugate humanity, has deep-seated trauma. Any of his cruel acts are not justified by this, but they serve as a reason for what he did. While [some object](#) with his redemption of sorts, another villain is his abuser: Dr. Emilia (Amy Landecker), a manipulative and power-hungry scientist. Others [have stated](#) that her role as an abuser emphasizes the "potency of early trauma."

### *Tangled*



*Cass, using her moonstone powers, stands in front of her throne and speaks to Raps*

*Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure*, called *Tangled: The Series* in the show's first season, focuses on trauma. The 2010 animated film *Tangled*, which preceded the series, also [explores](#)

trauma, toxic parentage, and emotional abuse. Others [even employed](#) the terrible tower where Rapunzel "Raps" lives, by force, as a metaphor for stages of abuse.

The series introduces Cassandra "Cass" (by Eden Espinosa), [a complex character](#) with trauma and PTSD. She sings about it, declaring she has nothing left to lose as she goes down a "path paved in black." As acknowledged by storyboarder Amber Vanich, lesbian vibes [were imbued](#) in her drawings of Cass.

She has a troubled past like Raps. She has the same "mother", causing the show to declare they were "sisters". This couldn't be further from the truth. Gothel, the birth mother of Cass, was Raps' kidnapper, leading to [irreparable trauma](#).

The evil Zhan Tri manipulates her, exploiting her trauma and plays on her triggers. As a result, she lashes out, blames Raps, and her emotions flair, especially when using [moonstone powers](#) to fight Raps, with sundrop powers. Often, Cass processes her [thoughts and feelings](#) about Raps, sometimes feeling that Raps is holding her back.

In the series finale, she helps Raps to defeat Zhan Tri and both reconcile. While Raps marries Eugene, her boyfriend since the series' beginning, Cass and Raps declare their love for one other. This is presumably platonic as Disney wouldn't allow it otherwise.

There is potential for a series spinoff of Cass, who departs on a journey at the series end, possibly to come to terms with her trauma and atone for her past misdeeds. Some fans have theorized a [romantic ending](#) for both characters, shipped as "Cassunzel," say Raps is pansexual or [bisexual](#), or otherwise embrace this ship.

### ***She-Ra and the Princesses of Power***



*Adora and Catra clashing with one another in the season five opening*

Trauma interlaces this now iconic series, a reboot of the 1980s Filmation animated series *She-Ra: Princess of Power*.

The series centers on Adora and Catra, voiced by Aimee Carrero and AJ Michalka. They begin as friends but continue to have complicated feelings as they are on different sides of the conflict. At the series' end, their romantic relationship begins. They kiss and it saves the world from destruction, canonizing what fans dub "Catradora."

Adora has a specific type of trauma. One reviewer [described it](#) as eco-trauma, saying that Adora suffers from treating ecological harm as a form of trauma, something which someone tries to repress to avoid its "painful effects." This repression for Adora is external, as the First Ones impose it on her and attempt to turn the entire planet into a Death Star-like weapon.

Even so, it is through this planet she can access the memories of her predecessor. Light Hope (Morla Gorrondona), Adora's AI guide of sorts, imposed a memory wipe to forget the previous She-Ra, Mara (Zehra Fazal). In the end, Adora doesn't sacrifice her life, but Catra saves her, with both confessing their love for one another.

Trauma continues to follow Adora throughout the series, as she [feels unworthy](#) of doing "anything good." In contrast, Catra appears self-assured on the surface, but she becomes plagued

by her own doubt and guilt. This causes her to become controlling and aggressive, almost destroying the entire world at one point. More to the point, she spends a majority of the show as a broken and battered woman "[defined by her trauma](#)." She makes decisions dictated by her experience with loss rather than from a place of love.

### *Adventure Time*



*Marcy in monster form, and Bonnie, fighting together in the episode "Varmints"*

Marceline "Marcy" Abadeer is a fan-favorite vampire queen in this animated series. Marcy is more than a wacky character voiced by Olivia Olson. Instead, she is a bisexual badass. Her character [informed](#) how then-storyboarder Rebecca Sugar told LGBTQ storylines in the future.

Marcy has a long and painful life, with her past trauma defining her. In fact, she becomes a vampire, or more exactly a half-demon, half-vampire multiracial woman in a traumatic way, becoming a source of her misery. She [becomes stunted](#) as an 18-year-old and never grows beyond that. Even so, she goes through an emotional journey of sorts, feeling like a monster.

This doesn't happen on her own. She begins a romantic relationship with Princess Bonnibel "Bonnie" Bubblegum (Hynden Walch) in the series finale. The *Adventure Time*:

*Distant Lands* episode "Obsidian" explores the relationship further. The episode was all the rage in fall 2020. Queer fans who love Bubblie (Bonnie and Marcy) were glad to see more of a focus on their relationship.

In that episode, Marcy [grapples](#) with her outer and inner demons, singing to Bonnie that she "always felt like a monster". Bonnie comforts her while she has her own insecurities. They work through her struggles together while Bonnie has her own traumas born from her position as ruler of the Candy Kingdom.

This is not unique to her. Protagonists Finn and Jake, voiced by Jeremy Shada and John DiMaggio, are often thrown into conflict, either with the Lich, or other enemies. Even BMO (Niki Yang), who is a computer/video game console unit, who has no definite gender, becomes traumatized through the series. The Ice King (Tom Kenny), Huntress Wizard (Maria Bumford), Flame Princess (Jessica DiCicco), and many others have trauma, too.

### *Star Trek: Lower Decks*



*Mariner fights with her digital self in the episode "Crisis Point"*

Beckett Mariner (Tawny Newsome) is a character in this [mature sci-fi comedy series](#). She is a human and an ensign aboard a ship known as the USS *Cerritos* who likes to buck rules. This is in part because she is the daughter of the ship's captain, Carol Freeman (Dawnn Lewis), even though she is very good at "[all things Starfleet](#)."

Although some have argued that her trauma is sometimes [played for laughs](#), the series still explains her motivations. Others have argued that the whole Starfleet crew needs therapy and better mental health care for everything they have gone through. One character, Shaxs (Fred Tatasciore), [even dies](#) at the end of one season to save Sam Rutherford (Eugene Cordero).

Mariner breaks protocol as a character, with the most recent season indicating [she is bisexual or pansexual](#). At one point, the show's creator, Mike McMahan, [stated](#) that Mariner's former lover was Captain Amina Ramsey. He added that that "every Starfleet officer is probably at the baseline bisexual" in a sense.

She was also shown to have dated a man named Steve Levy. In one Season 2 episode she even declared that she had dated "bad boys, bad girls, bad gender non-binary babes, [and] ruthless alien masterminds" in the past. McMahan confirmed that Mariner will be dating a woman named Jennifer Sh'reyan (Lauren Lapkus) in the show's [next season](#).

Mariner is not the only character with traumatic experiences. The same is the case for the ship's chief engineer, Andy Billups. He may be asexual, as he has no interest in having sex with male or female guards. Other characters are thrown into conflict-prone situations as well, which are the breeding ground for trauma.

### *Arcane*



*Cait and Vi look in horror at Jinx's missile heading toward the Piltover council*

Trauma and tragedy fill this mature series. This [is balanced](#) with a tone not "too dour" and a plot that doesn't drag the story down. This is a series with themes of class oppression taking place in a world with "[no sexism, racism, or homophobia](#)." Human experimentation, acceptance, struggle, and family separation are important themes. There's also depiction of attempted suicide, death, and kidnapping.

The adopted brother of Jinx (Ella Purnell), first known as Powder, taunts her, undermining her self-confidence. This combines with her fear of abandonment and guilt after some of her adopted family dies, [causing her](#) to become traumatized. She is still haunted by what happened in the past. Silco taps into these feelings, raising Jinx as her own. He doesn't fault her for lashing when triggered, even when it threatens his own operations.

She isn't the only one affected by trauma. For Violet "Vi" (Hailee Steinfeld), this comes from her rough childhood living in the undercity, and separation from her sister, Jinx. For Caitlyn "Cait" Kiramman (Katie Leung), she has to deal with the pressure of working as an enforcer for the upper city of Piltover and new pressures of the undercity. This includes tense, stressful, and violent situations, especially with Vi.

Although some criticized its depiction, there is no doubt that in this series, Cait and Vi have [romantic feelings](#) for one another. It is what fans call "CaitVi," "Violyn" or the official moniker, "Piltover's Finest", with over 10,000 subscribers to subreddits for the pairing. In the aftermath of the end of the last season, Vi and Cait will likely have to pick up the pieces after Jinx assassinated the council members of Piltover.

***gen:LOCK***



*Fight between Madrani (left) and "Sinclair" (right)*

Like *Arcane*, this sci-fi mecha action series is [mature and filled with sorrow](#). Due to a generally negative audience response and a subreddit which has turned against the show, renewal is unlikely. HBO Max and Rooster Teeth threw the show to the wolves. For all its faults, the series depicts trauma unlike any other, so it deserves a mention in this article.

Val/entina 'Val' Romanyszyn, who is a genderfluid and pansexual woman voiced by Asia Kate Dillon, goes through a lot in the series. The man she loves, Kazu Iida (Kōichi Yamadera), dies in front of her, and she watches countless others get injured or killed.

She is not alone in this. A demon named Nemesis, in the head of the show's protagonist, Julian Chase (Michael B. Jordan) torments him throughout the series. It turns out that he is only a copy of his original self, and the "demon" is another copy. Even so, he comes to terms with Nemesis and sees it as another part of himself.

Trauma and the subconscious are [major themes in this series](#). Other members of Chase's team, Cameron 'Cammie' MacCloud (Maisie Williams) and Yasamin 'Yaz' Madrani (Golshifteh Farahani) are also traumatized. Fighting the purportedly "evil" Union deeply affects Cammie, Yaz, Kazu, and Val, as does stresses from their lives before the war. The same is the case for Robert Sinclair, a fighter for the Polity and later a guerrilla. The show's second season reveals that he has a boyfriend.

Some reviewers have stated that the series has "mental illness, trauma recovery, technological intimacy and identity" [at its center](#). Others said that the series has characters [with distinct personalities](#) who have to tackle their own trauma.

## Closing thoughts

There are many other examples of characters with trauma who are part of the LGBTQ community, such as Daisy in *Magical Girl Friendship Squad*, and Fry and Hamburg in *Kid Cosmic* to give two examples.

There are other characters who struggle with trauma, although it is harder to pin them into the LGBTQ community apart from headcanons. Take, for example, Beck in [\*Tron:Uprising\*](#), Reagan Ridley [\*in Inside Job\*](#), and Ron Stoppable [\*in Kim Possible\*](#).

I would be remiss to not mention Steven Universe in the series of the same name. Due to his fighting against corrupted Gems and Gem warriors, he develops trauma. This is [further explored](#) in the limited 2019-2020 series, *Steven Universe Future*, which brings trauma to the forefront. He attempts to come to terms with and address the traumatic incidents which plague his mind.

In the end, more series with mature themes and LGBTQ characters suggests that characters racked with trauma are in the cards.

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## **Concluding Words**

After putting this together, I am inspired to write even more reviews and posts about LGBTQ+ representation in animation. In fact, I have upcoming reviews this year on *Hailey's On It!*, *Soaring Sky: Pretty Cure*, *Yohane the Parhelion*, *Disenchantment* (part 5), *Adventure Time: Fionna and Cake*, *Star Trek: Lower Decks* (season 4), all of which have direct or indirect queer representation. There will also be reviews written this year about *Helluva Boss*, *Stardust Telepath*, *The Vexations of a Shut-In Vampire Princess*, and *I'm in Love with the Villainous*. I also have a post like chapters 1 to 3, which covers LGBTQ+ representation in animation and anime, which is tentatively entitled “From Yuri to Beyond: LGBTQ Representation in Animation in 2023.”

- Burkely

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